

INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY USSR (Kazakhstan)
SUBJECT Metal Alloy Plant at Aktyubinsk

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Aktyubinsk on the Ilek, a tributary of the Ural.

1. a. Aktyubinsk (50° 15' N, 57° 20' E), on the Moscow Tashkent railway, has about 80,000 inhabitants. Although the town itself covers a wide area, it is composed for the most part of mud huts situated in small gardens. Its streets are wide but unpaved and barely passable in bad weather. South of the town is a very large well-developed airfield, a base for all air routes to Central Asia. The airfield is the most notable and interesting feature of the town. The entire area around Aktyubinsk is a penal area containing penal camps, internment camps, and PW camps. After a few years in camp, the convicts are allowed some measure of freedom. With the exception of the native Kazakhs, all persons living in this area are prisoners or descendants of prisoners.
- b. The area is sparsely inhabited but quite fruitful and has a fairly good climate. Its native resources are chrome ores, nickel ores, coal, lime, and alabaster. The necessary labor for the exploitation of these resources is drafted from the prison camps. All construction is done through the Aktyubinsk Construction Trust. Approximately 1000 convicts and German PWs are placed at the disposal of this enterprise. Treatment of forced labor on the construction sites was generally good. Corporal punishment was never inflicted. A settlement is being built 10 km west of the town for the large metal alloy plant. The houses afford comfortable modern living and present a great contrast to the primitive structures of the native Kazakhs. The construction of this settlement was started in the summer of 1945, and in the fall of 1947 sufficient buildings had been erected to house 8,000 persons. The progress of construction was somewhat delayed because of the difficulty of procuring materials. The Trust operates a brick work which delivers about 8 million bricks per year and a lime kiln which produces about 4000 tons of fired lime per year. Both plants are obsolescent and were operated by German internees. Construction work was not interrupted during the winter months; walls were built and foundations were excavated. Often the work which had been accomplished during the winter months had to be torn down in the spring and rebuilt, because the mortar had not set.

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- a. There is enough sand on hand. Foundations are built of slag from the alloy plant. The project uses about 1000 men, including 200-300 technicians. The work consists of construction of housing and one factory (presumably for the manufacture of motors).
2. a. The metal alloy plant of Aktyubinsk, the most important industry of the locality, is situated 10 km west of the town near the railroad line. Several rail connections lead into the plant. The plant was under construction between 1937 and 1947. It consists of two parts, the electrical power plant and the smelting plant proper. The power plant is a thermal plant and operates at a pressure of 35 atmosphere (atm). The boilers are heated with coal dust. Overloads are caught with supplementary oil heating. The load of the power station amounts to about 20,000 kw. The power plant supplies current for the town of Aktyubinsk as well as for the smelting plant. There is no connection with any other power plant. When the power is interrupted or when extensive repairs have to be made, the power is cut off. Once a year, the boilers are cleaned; this work lasts about three days. During this period, the power plant and the smelting plant do not operate. The power supply to the town is also cut off.
- b. The smelting plant smelts down a high grade ferro-chromium. The chrome ores are mined about 80 km from the locality. The mine is operated during the day. The labor for this mining work is drafted from a convict camp which has about 8000 inmates. Furthermore, there were about 150 German internees in that camp employed in free work; they enjoyed the same type of limited freedom as that granted the local inhabitants. About 5000 tons were shipped from the plant every month in railroad cars belonging to the plant. The smelting plant has 5 electrical furnaces capable of operating with about 3-4000 kw. There are always 4 furnaces in operation. The metal is smelted down in small blocks of about 150 kg. The monthly production totals about 3000 t. The electric furnace slag is used for the construction of roads and foundations. The workers, numbering about 4000, are drafted largely from the nearby convict camp. Adjoining the plant there is also a camp of German internees, but it is strictly forbidden to give foreigners access to the plant. Apart from the free Russian workers, only Russian prisoners are used as workers in the plant.
- c. The plant may be recognized by the one large chimney of the power plant. The chimney is not very high; it measures about 60 m in height with a top diameter of about 3 m. Since the boiler operates by means of under grate blast, the chimney serves only as an exit for smoke gases and not as a channel for combustion gases. The smoke of the power plant is visible over a wide area. From the line plant, which is 30 km from the power plant, the latter's smoke is still clearly visible. Within a radius of several hundred km, this plant is the only large industrial plant of heavy industry.
- d. The coal for the power plant is mined in the Kurashassai pit, about 12 km to the south. The shafts are about 70m below ground and are very low, with a maximum height of 80 cm. The mined coal is transferred by means of winches through shafts falling at a 45° angle. About 600 workers are employed, including 400 German PW's and 200 free Russians. An average of 15,000 tons are mined per month; most of the product goes to the electric power plant. The coal is of inferior quality and has an ash content of 40 to 50%. Coal supplies from Karashassai do not fill the needs of the plant and supplementary coal is brought in from Karaganda (about 2000 tons per month). The Karaganda coal is of very good quality. It has an ash content of only 15%. The coal area of Karaganda is located at a distance of about 60 km. Since transportation difficulties are considerable, large coal dumps are kept on hand in order to fill needs for a period of several months.

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